

# India Expands Ramsar Network to 98 Sites

**Relevance:** GS Paper III – Environment & Biodiversity

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## Why in News?

Ahead of World Wetlands Day 2026, the Prime Minister announced the addition of Patna Bird Sanctuary (Uttar Pradesh) and Chhari-Dhand (Gujarat) as new Ramsar Sites. With this, the total number of Ramsar Sites in India has increased to **98**.

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## What is World Wetlands Day?

World Wetlands Day is observed every year on **2nd February** to highlight the importance of wetlands and to commemorate the signing of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands in 1971.

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## Newly Added Ramsar Sites

### 1. Chhari-Dhand (Gujarat)

- Located in the **Kutch region**, between the Banni grasslands and salt flats
- A **seasonal saline wetland**, expanding up to ~80 sq km during monsoon
- It is the **only Conservation Reserve in Gujarat**
- Lies along the **Western Migratory Flyway**

#### Biodiversity Highlights:

- Supports ~30,000 Common Cranes annually
- Large populations of Greater and Lesser Flamingos
- Presence of threatened species:
  - Sociable Lapwing (Critically Endangered)
  - Common Pochard (Vulnerable)

#### Other Features:

- Surrounding areas support species like chinkara, caracal, and desert fox
  - Known for the unique **“Chir Batti” phenomenon** (mysterious lights)
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### 2. Patna Bird Sanctuary (Uttar Pradesh)

- Located in **Etah district (Jalesar subdivision)**
- Area of just over **1 sq km**, making it one of the smallest sanctuaries in Uttar Pradesh
- Comprises freshwater marshes, woodlands, and grasslands

#### Biodiversity Highlights:

- Hosts **tens of thousands of migratory birds** during winter
- Important species include:
  - Rosy Pelican
  - Eurasian Spoonbill
  - Northern Pintail

### Key Facts:

- Supports **178 bird species** and **252 plant species**
- Part of the **Central Asian Flyway**
- Recognized as an Important Bird and Biodiversity Area by BirdLife International

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## Key Concepts for Prelims

### What is a Ramsar Site?

A Ramsar Site is a wetland designated as being of **international importance** under the Ramsar Convention, with a focus on conservation and sustainable use.

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### India and the Ramsar Convention

- India became a Contracting Party on **1 February 1982**

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## UPSC Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

### Q1. (2019)

Consider the following statements:

1. Under Ramsar Convention, it is mandatory for the Government of India to protect all wetlands in the country.
2. The Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2010 were framed based on Ramsar Convention recommendations.
3. The Rules also include the catchment areas of wetlands.

**Correct Answer:** (c) 3 only

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### Q2. (2014)

With reference to Wetlands International:

1. It is an intergovernmental organization formed by Ramsar signatories.
2. It works at the field level and supports policy development.

**Correct Answer:** (b) 2 only

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## Prelims Quick Revision Points

- India now has **98 Ramsar Sites (2026)**

- Chhari-Dhand: Gujarat | Saline wetland | Flamingos | Chir Batti
  - Patna Bird Sanctuary: Uttar Pradesh | Smallest | Central Asian Flyway
  - Ramsar Convention: 1971 (Iran)
  - India joined: 1982
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## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

### 1. What is a Ramsar Site?

A wetland of international importance designated under the Ramsar Convention.

### 2. When did India join the Ramsar Convention?

India joined on **1 February 1982**.

### 3. Where is Chhari-Dhand located?

In the Kutch district of Gujarat, between the Banni grasslands and the Rann of Kutch.

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